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ABSTRACT

This article offers teachers a comprehensive set of questions to ask themselves in evaluating their instructional materials and offers proposals for the adaptation and design of materials. These suggestions are postulated on a definition of language as communication and language teaching as a communicative process. The following are discussed: (1) the appropriateness of materials to the teaching situation and the curriculum; (2) the content of the materials; (3) the teaching-learning activities the material should promote; and (4) new directions for materials design. The central concern of the paper is the appropriateness of the materials to the methodology. The evaluation, adaptation, and innovation of language teaching materials must be based on methodological criteria. Methodology incorporates two sets of related criteria: criteria for the selection and organization of content and that which determines the type and range of the teaching-learning activities. Content should be information and data that are cognitively and affectively significant to the learner and that stimulates negotiation in an interpersonal context. Content should be sequenced so as to maintain continuity throughout the materials. Activities rather than models and differentiation rather than predictability underlie the diagrammatic summary of decisions to be made in designing an activity with the materials. (PMJ)

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EVALUATING AND DESIGNING LANGUAGE TEACHING MATERIALS

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ABSTRACT

This article offers guidelines for the evaluation of language teaching materials by discussing a detailed range of questions and a number of criteria which teachers may apply to any current materials. It also presents a number of proposals for materials design which are based upon a view of language teaching and learning as a communicative process.

EVALUATING AND DESIGNING LANGUAGE TEACHING MATERIALS*

Christopher N. Candlin & Michael P. Breen

This article has two aims. First, to offer a comprehensive set of questions which can be used in teachers' evaluations of the materials with which they work. We would intend that teachers may use such questions as a blueprint or framework for their own judgements about and choices of materials. Secondly, the article offers a number of proposals as the basis for the adaptation of those materials and for the design of new materials. The proposals for adaptation and innovation are based upon the recognition that teaching materials should face the learner with examples of, and opportunities for, language use. The proposals are intended as suggestions to those teachers who wish to enable their learners to learn to communicate.[1]

In this article the term 'materials' refers to any published or unpublishe data in any medium or collection of media used for the purpose of language teaching and learning. The guidelines for the evaluation of materials can apply to single items of material as well as to sets of materials.

The guidelines for evaluation and the proposals for adaptation and innovation focus on four main issues:

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* This article has developed out of workshops on materials evaluation and design with a number of groups of English Language Teachers. We wish to thank the teachers for expressing interest in the guidelines and proposals detailed here and for contributing towards the refinement of our ideas.

1. The actual criteria on which the proposals are based derive from a definition of language as communication and a view of language learning as a communicative process. A detailed consideration of these criteria and their theoretical and research background is given in M. P. Breen and C. N. Candlin (forthcoming).

(i) In what ways should materials be appropriate to the teaching situation and to the curriculum in which they are used? (ii) What should be the content of the materials? (iii) What teaching-learning activities should the materials promote? (iv) What new directions are available for materials design? Each section of this article takes one of these issues and discusses a range of questions which arise.

1. PUTTING MATERIALS IN THEIR PLACE

In this section we will be more concerned with general issues and questions about materials and we will examine a number of concepts which emerge from contemporary views of language teaching. In the later sections we will consider more closely the possible contents and activities which may be offered by materials.

Any language teaching materials need to be seen in their proper context. We need to know, firstly, to what extent materials are sensitive to the teaching situation in which they are to be used. Secondly, we need to be sure that the materials are appropriate to the particular language teaching curriculum within which they are supposed to serve as a resource. We can specify each of these requirements more precisely.

1.1 Are the materials sensitive to situation?

Many current materials are 'ideal' in that they give the impression of usefulness and applicability for any learner - at some assumed 'level' of proficiency - in any place in the world. Such materials are not so much 'ideal' as idealised in that they do not take account of situation. Unless they are adapted and situationalised in some significant way they cease to be of any direct value to anybody anywhere. In fact, there can be no such thing as ideal and universally applicable language teaching materials. Even when materials designers have a particular situation in mind, they must recognise that

their materials will always undergo processes of reinterpretation by the different users of the materials. Teachers, learners and classrooms impose their own meanings on the materials. The only alternative to this reinterpretation by the users is one where the materials come to prescribe the teaching and learning. Teachers can become driven by the materials, and the efforts of the learners to learn and use language subordinated to the task of coming to terms with the special requirements and conventions of the materials. In such cases learners are obliged to suspend their own reality, and teachers are obliged to instil interest and involvement in something over which neither teacher nor learner has much possibility of control.

1.1.1 In what ways should materials be sensitive to situation? We are aware, firstly, that every language teaching situation reflects certain socio-culturally selected educational aims and ideas. Language teaching is used to serve the individual within the context of the state and its needs. We know, too, that any language teaching situation has its own specific human resources; its particular teachers and learners. Thirdly, it exhibits its own material resources; its own financing, its facilities, and the time invested in its teaching and learning. Each of these characteristic 'constraints' imposes certain demands on teaching and learning and, in particular, on the materials to be used.

1.1.2 Considering as an important example the matter of human resources, we can ask to what extent the materials are appropriate to the teachers and the learners? In answering such a bald question we have to exercise care because materials producers are in the business of making materials attractive to teachers not to learners. There

is more than a hint of suspicion in the minds of materials producers that teachers will choose materials which match the teachers' own experiences and preconceptions of language learning. Materials are therefore designed to look familiar. More searchingly we can ask to what extent the materials constrain rather than exploit the teacher's own competence as a teacher. Do they reflect or contradict the teacher's theories or beliefs about teaching and learning? Do they match the teacher's preferred methodology and open up new directions for it? Does the view of language implicit within the materials conflict with or complement that of the teacher?

Of the learners in a particular situation we should ask whether or not the materials have been learner-tested. Have they been evaluated by learners who have used them? Are there clear guidelines for learners on how the materials are to be exploited? If the materials have been learner-tested, and if they guide the learner in their use, which group of learners were the materials planned for and evaluated by? Often enough learners are made to match materials rather than the other way round.

1.1.3 What other resources are assumed by the materials? Do they call for special classrooms and special timetables? Do they require media resources beyond the capacity of the institution to provide? What is the relative cost of the materials and the actual cost to the student? What is their cost relative to the 'life' of the materials and their actual value to the student? There may be greater benefit in smaller quantitites of varied materials than in classroom sets of one particular course.

These are only some of the questions which any language teaching situation poses to materials designers. Of course, materials share with all the other resources in language teaching the potential to overcome constraints

within the situation, but to do so they must at least begin from a sensitivity to that situation. Many teachers are well aware that materials can become a constraint themselves. Materials pose two basic questions: Is it the teaching-learning situation which needs to be changed in order to accommodate the materials? Or do the materials need to be replaced by others which will more adequately serve the existing situation?

1.2 Are the materials appropriate to the particular curriculum?

Here we move to a more specific context than the overall situation of the language teaching. Any language teaching curriculum tries to answer three interrelated questions: What are the teaching-learning objectives of the course? How are these objectives to be achieved? To what extent have the objectives been achieved and have they been appropriate? So, a curriculum can be defined as a relationship between some selected Purposes, the Methodology which serves as the means towards those Purposes, and the Evaluation procedures which inform us on the effectiveness of the Methodology and the appropriateness of our original Purposes. Materials need to be contextualised within this curriculum process; they should be seen as one resource within it and not the 'driving-force' of the curriculum itself. It will be the case, however, that materials may have their own purposes, they may imply or even prescribe a methodology, and they may provide criteria against which to assess learner's progress, judge our own methodology and reconsider the suitability of our own original purposes. So, there needs to be harmony between the 'hidden curriculum' of the materials we use and the actual curriculum within which we work.

The greater part of this article concerns questions and proposals which seek a positive, harmonious relationship between materials and a language teaching curriculum. In

this section, however, we shall focus on the basic curriculum characteristics - the three components of Purposes, Methodology and Evaluation - as the framework of language teaching and learning within which our materials should avoid idealisation. Current interest in so-called 'functional' language teaching and 'functional' materials offers an example to illustrate the problems of idealisation that materials can face.

If we examine Purposes in such 'functional' materials, we find firstly that the purposes they explicitly state are at odds with the purposes they actually imply, and secondly that the change in purposes they advocate is to be accomplished without parallel changes in methodology. The explicit purpose of these 'functional' materials is to teach language as use by means of exposing learners to a sequence of language 'functions'. Implicitly, however, the definition of such 'functions' given in the materials owes nothing to a genuine view of language as use, where an essential characteristic is a variable and unpredictable relationship between function and form. In such 'functional' materials, the 'functions' are presented as if they could be static, separable and categorizable 'items', and are generally exemplified in some pre-selected sentences or prescripted dialogue. As such they lack the genuine contextualisation of real communication and have no appropriate language function other than as model types. Thus, two myths are perpetuated: First, that there can be some predictable relationship, out of context, between a 'function' and those forms to which it is arbitrarily yoked, and, second, that 'functions' are a theoretically established and systematic framework upon which the teaching of form can be based. So, the teaching of 'functions' is erroneously confused with the teaching of the formal or structural nature of language. This apparent change in purposes is exposed as a sham by the fact that such materials offer little or no change in methodology.

Essentially the same methodology which once served the teaching and learning of language structure is assumed or proposed within many 'functional' materials. Apart from tasks and exercises involving idealised data designed to give teachers and learners the impression they are dealing with language use - such as written dialogues and other unreal and paradoxical texts - these materials imply that 'functions' can be presented in some valid sequence, learned as separable and listable 'items' based on consistent 'patterns', and memorizable like the phrase-book phrases they most obviously resemble.[2]
Given the warning of this current example, what are the ways in which materials should be appropriate to the curriculum they serve? If we assume that a teacher exploits a curriculum with its particular Purposes, its own specific Methodology for their achievement, and its own Evaluation procedures, what are the questions that a teacher should ask of materials?

1.2.1 Are the materials appropriate to Purposes?

Here our first concern is with the specific target language, and secondly with the important initial characteristics of the learners who are taking the course.

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2. A comparison of 'traditional' structural- situational materials with more 'modern' functional materials using the guidelines offered in sections 2 & 3 of this article will reveal these and other significant similarities. There are other misleading assertions and assumptions. One of these is that the communicative use of language emerges from a set of 'functions' and that it is to be achieved primarily (and on occasion exclusively) through oral-aural practice. We have to deduce that communication does not take place between writers and readers.

1.2.1 (a) Appropriate to the Target Language?

Is the language of the materials derived from a socio-linguistic analysis of the target performance repertoire?[3] This question implies that the data within the materials should be authentic to the target in the sense that the data should come from native speakers and be intended for native speakers in the target situation. However, we can also ask what this target performance repertoire represents or is dependent upon. Examples of target performance - what the native speaker would say in this or that event - are particular uses of the target community's conventions governing meanings or ideas, the conventions governing how these meanings should be shared and negotiated in interpersonal behaviour, and the conventions which govern language form, or the text, which realises such meanings and such behaviour. Target performance, therefore, manifests the native speaker's knowledge of the conventions which govern communication. Each example of target performance represents a meeting-point of these three knowledge systems - ideational knowledge, interpersonal knowledge and textual knowledge.[4]

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3. A performance repertoire refers to the selective use of language which any curriculum takes as its Purpose, however extensive and general, or restricted and specific such a repertoire may be. Even native speakers control only a selection of varieties of a language, and such a repertoire will reflect the communicative performance experience and demands of that speaker. Language teaching can be seen to be concerned with such target repertoires in the socio-linguistic sense (Gumperz 1964) rather than with some 'global' or ideal target 'language'.

4. These terms derive from Halliday (1973). For further discussion of these knowledge systems and their implications for the language teaching curriculum, see M. P. Breen and C. N. Candlin (forth coming).

Examples of target performance also involve the communicative abilities of the users of the language. Communicating, whether through speech or writing, calls upon the abilities to interpret and express meanings, and to negotiate meanings. The skills, either taken together or individually, depend upon these three crucial and underlying abilities. Reading, writing, listening and speaking are the means through which the abilities to interpret, express and negotiate act and become refined.

To sum up so far: Any selected target performance repertoire which may represent the ultimate Purpose of the curriculum will imply underlying communicative knowledge and communicative abilities which are shared - to some degree - by all the users of that target. The abilities we have identified draw upon and act upon the knowledge systems; the two continually interrelate. We can call this unity of knowledge and abilities the target competence with which the curriculum is concerned.

The distinction we have just drawn between the specific target performance repertoire and its underlying target competence leads us to replace the original question with the following:

(i) Are the materials authentic to the target performance repertoire?

(ii) Are the materials authentic to the underlying knowledge and abilities which the target performance repertoire represents?

If authenticity to the target is a criterion we wish to impose on materials, then (i) would demand actual data from that specific target repertoire which is the Purpose of the curriculum. On the other hand (ii) would demand any authentic data which themselves manifest or draw upon those underlying knowledge systems and abilities which underlie the target in question, but which could, in

principle, underlie a range of different target repertoires.[5] Although different target repertoires of different curricula may well share common features, there is likely to be even more overlap between the target competences which underlie them. So, the second question would imply that there need be no one-to-one relationship between the data in the materials and the actual target performance repertoire. Authenticity to target in terms of this question implies authenticity to the native speaker's communicative knowledge and abilities.

The distinction between (i) and (ii) above leads to a third question:

(iii) To what extent do the materials need to be authentic to the target, in either sense of the term?

Materials can be seen as a means to the target rather than necessarily embodying the target itself. Perhaps materials should serve the process of teaching and learning rather than the product of teaching and learning? If we can accept this view, then materials should serve mainly as a link between learner and target. To do this, they will have to draw on both the target and that which the learner brings as an initial contribution to the course, so as to exploit the potential relationships between the two. Here we require authenticity to target and authenticity to the learner. Now the question becomes one of discovering what the materials can draw on that would relate the two. They can either build on possible

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5. For example, if we consider a doctor listening to a patient's answers in a consultation, his task is to infer very specific medical information from a relatively small quantity of communicative input. The doctor's task of interpretation parallels that of a technical student who has to derive technical information from an oral description of some machine process. Both are involved in interpreting language in order to infer quite specific information. The contexts and the data will be different but the ability to interpret for a particular purpose is common.

relationships between the learner's initial repertoire and the target repertoire, or they can mediate between the learner's initial competence - initial communicative knowledge and abilities - and the target competence. Given the likelihood of overlap among competences being greater than that between repertoires, it makes sense for materials to be primarily concerned with developing the learner's underlying knowledge and abilities. In short, to focus on the learner's process competence, and be less directly devoted to target performance data. Here for us lies the possibility of distinguishing 'Process' materials from 'Product' materials.

We now have several criteria we can call on when considering how materials might be appropriate to 'target language'. (i) Authenticity to target performance repertoire; (ii) Authenticity to the knowledge and abilities underlying such a repertoire - authenticity to target competence; or (iii) Seeing materials as a means to the ultimate Purposes, as serving the process of teaching and learning and representing a link between learner and target. These criteria are not necessarily exclusive, of course. We may well demand that materials meet all three criteria to some degree or other. The degree would depend on answers to other kinds of question we may ask of materials. One such question will be: in what ways should materials be appropriate to the learner who is entering the course?

1.2.1 (b) Appropriate to Initial Learner Characteristics? It is an important truism that materials should start from the learner and work towards the target. Whatever the Purposes of the curriculum we need to consider therefore what the learner can initially contribute to those Purposes and what will be the learner's own expectations of the curriculum. We do this for three reasons. Firstly, to avoid idealisation of the curriculum and its materials away

from the actual learners who are involved. Secondly, to exploit those potential contributions of learners which may be appropriate to the achievement of the target. Thirdly, to account for likely differences between the materials designer's view of the Purposes and the individual learner's own perceptions. Such contributions and expectations will, of course, vary between learners and - significantly - vary within the learner as the learning progresses. Purposes of materials will need to accommodate this heterogeneity and variability in learner contributions and expectations if they are to link learner and target. In assessing the appropriateness of materials in relation to these learner characteristcs, we can ask the following questions.

(i) Is account taken of the learner's initial repertoire? (e.g. aspects of the mother tongue and/or aspects of the target repertoire the learner may imperfectly 'know' etc.) To what extent? In what ways?

(ii) Is account taken of the learner's initial competence? - initial communicative knowledge and abilities - To what extent? In what ways?

(iii) Is account taken of relevant personal characteristics of the learner? (e.g. age, sex, social and cultural identity etc) To what extent? In what ways?

(iv) Do the materials accommodate the learner's expectations of what language learning requires and the learner's expectations of what the target requires? (These expectations may stem from the learner's previous educational experience, and they are powerful factors in the learner's definition of the learning task)

(v) Do the materials allow for the learner's own definition of learning needs? Are the learner's own specific interests and motivation accommodated? Not only are needs, interests, and motivations distinct, they vary both among learners and over time as the learning progresses. How do the materials cater for this differentiation and variation?

In order, then, to reflect the particular Purposes of the curriculum, materials must account for the specific 'target language' and for initial learner characteristics. 'Target language' can be viewed in terms of a performance repertoire and/or an underlying competence. Learner characteristics can be viewed in terms of particular contributions and expectations. A selection of purposes in any curriculum, and the purposes of the materials within it, can be informed from these two main sources. Materials need to reflect both if they are to avoid idealisation. The role of Methodology is to draw these two sources together; to enable the learner possessed of initial and changing characteristics to come to terms with the target.

1.2.2 Are the materials appropriate to Methodology?

This is the central concern of this article. We have argued that, in considering the question of authenticity to target, materials may be identified more directly with the teaching-learning process - with Methodology - than with the product of teaching and learning. This argument implies, in particular, that the evaluation, adaptation and innovation of language teaching materials must be based primarily on methodological criteria. Our emphasis on the need for materials to be appropriate to initial learner characteristics further implies that materials should start from the learner and serve as a link between the learner and the target. It has also been our argument that the idealisation of many materials stems from confused Purposes and a 'methodology' which is insensitive to the actual process of teaching and learning. Such materials frequently offer model target data (often idealised in itself) as the driving-force of the curriculum, requiring learners to 'act upon' this product through imitation and practice. The process of teaching and learning, involving the development and refinement of the learning, is paradoxically absent from the materials themselves.

What methodological criteria within any curriculum should materials reflect? To answer this question we need, firstly, to see the methodology of the curriculum in terms of two interrelated elements: Content and Process. These are both exploited by Methodology as the dual means to the curriculum Purposes. Content in methodology is information and data, and it can serve as the link between the content of the target repertoire and that 'content' which the learner brings to the learning. We can additionally see Content as that which the teaching-learning Process works upon. In this way, Content is the servant of the Process within Methodology. Process is what teachers and learners undertake and achieve during language learning and it represents the language teaching curriculum in action in the classroom.

We can relate materials to methodology with reference to a set of principles for the selection and organisation of Content on the one hand, and to a set of principles for the design and selection of teaching-learning activities - as representative of the Process - on the other. Section 2 and 3 of this article examine these twin sets of principles in some detail, as well as the criteria which these principles may contain for the evaluation, adaptation and innovation of language teaching materials. Our point here is that materials will be appropriate to any language teaching curriculum to the extent that they serve as a resource within the Methodology of that curriculum. Materials which are primarily driven by Purposes - in terms of offering model data to be imitated, memorized and reproduced - idealise themselves away from the language learning process and, as such, they may not justifiably be seen as language teaching materials.

1.2.3 Are the materials appropriate to Evaluation?

Every curriculum adopts its own Evaluation procedures. Materials can serve as a possible source of evaluative criteria within the curriculum, both by focussing on the evaluation of learner progress and on the curriculum itself in terms of assessing the effectiveness of Methodology and the appropriateness of the original Purposes.[6] Evaluation can be either summative (or end-of-course) or formative (ongoing and 'guiding'), and materials can be exploited as a means of Evaluation in both these roles. What is important is that the selected Evaluation procedures of the particular curriculum must determine the ways in which, and the extent to which, the materials themselves aid Evaluation. The alternative to such assessment is to continue with Evaluation-driven materials which seem idealised from the process of teaching and learning in the same way as Purpose-driven materials. Teachers are well enough aware how those materials which are based on externally standardised and imposed tests and examinations come to control and prescribe every other aspect of the curriculum.

If we ask questions concerning the ways and the extent we might wish materials to aid our Evaluation procedures, we are led to consider several related problems.

1.2.3 (a) Do criteria exist within the materials which are useful as a basis for evaluating learner performance?

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6. The present article can be seen as an example of such curriculum evaluation in that it focusses on one resource which, as we have said, should mirror the whole curriculum.

Are such criteria (if they are present) sufficiently explicit to different learners so that the materials can act as a stimulus for learner-self-evaluation and for evaluation by the learners themselves as a group? This latter requirement would make materials contain criteria which can be differentially met by different learners. Materials in such a case would not assume any single or limited set of criteria for success, but would allow for differential success.

1.2.3 (b) To what extent and in what ways do the materials offer feedback to the learner? Do they give sufficient guidelines on the direction learners should take after success or failure at a task? Are such guidelines and such feedback based upon predetermined criteria, or do they allow for different learners achieving different tasks in different ways at different times?

1.2.3 (c) Should the materials provide the means for summative and/or formative evaluation of learner progress and curriculum appropriateness?

1.2.3 (d) Can learners apply their own evaluation to the contents and activities within the materials? If we accept the significance of personal socio-cultural attitudes in language learning, and the importance of learners' attitudes, values and emotions, then this becomes an important question for materials designers. We are all aware that communication and learning to communicate are highly evaluative activities. Requiring learners to confront language use as if it was devoid of such affective characteristics counts as a form of idealisation. This is especially so if we wish learners to draw upon their initial knowledge and experience in language use with its strong affective involvement. We could, then, demand of materials that they

be open to learner evaluation, by continually involving their attitudes, values and emotions. Indeed, we might expect the materials to stimulate learner judgements about Content and to provide activities which are characterised by strong attitudinal, evaluative and emotive potential. An outcome of such learner evaluation, of course, is an evaluation of the materials in terms of their own appropriateness to the learner's needs, interests and motivations in learning the language, and their effectiveness in helping the learner to learn. Since learners do evaluate the usefulness of materials against a range of socio-cultural and personal criteria, perhaps materials should exploit this rather than assuming that content and activities can be value-free and infallible. Such exploitation would acknowledge the strongly affective character of language in use and language learning, and ought therefore to be seen as a strength rather than as an admission of limitations.

1.3 Proposals for adaptation and innovation.

We have argued above that materials which are sensitive to the situation of teaching and learning, and which are appropriate to the particular language teaching curriculum, will be likely to avoid idealisation. We put forward proposals in this section directed against such idealisation and towards an appreciation of language learning and teaching as a communicative process.

1.3.1 Materials serve Methodology.

Language teaching materials should primarily serve as a resource within Methodology, and therefore the specific Purposes or Evaluation procedures of a curriculum are secondary concerns in materials design. Materials will help teachers and learners in the way that they incorporate Content as a 'carrier' of the teaching-learning Process, and in the way that they promote activities and

tasks which activate this Process (see Section 1.2.2 above). Materials can serve as a means to some specific Purposes and as a means for Evaluation, but they will do so for other reasons than purely Methodological ones (e.g. they will contain content which derives from learner definitions of their immediate or longer term needs, interests and motivations). Materials design can therefore be based on process criteria of teaching and learning rather than on product criteria (see Sections 2 and 3 which follow for a discussion of such criteria).

1.3.2 Authenticity is relative

There are three routes to authenticity in materials: (i) authentic data taken from the target performance repertoire (communication by native speakers for native speakers in the target community); (ii) data which is authentic to target competence in that it derives from the communicative knowledge and abilities underlying the particular target performance repertoire or a range of such repertoires; (iii) authenticity to the 'process competences' of different learners during the learning: taking 'process competence' to refer to underlying knowledge and abilities which the learner develops from initial competence during the teaching and learning.[7]

In materials design, therefore, we would propose:

(i) That authenticity to the target repertoire is neither necessary nor sufficient for the teaching-learning process;

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7. To these three we could add Widdowson's 'authentication' (Widdowson 1978) by which learners 'make authentic' subjectively data which are presented to them. Thus data can be authentic to a text-type (say a poem) but if it is not read as a poem, but as a source of grammatical information, it is not treated authentically.

(ii) That authenticity to target competence may be necessary but not sufficient for the teaching-learning process;

(iii) That authenticity to different learners' 'process competences' is necessary but may not be sufficient for the teaching-learning process;

(iv) That authenticity to target competence and different learners' process competences is both necessary and sufficient.

1.3.3 Materials will allow for Differentiation.

If we accept that authenticity to the learner within the teaching-learning process is a valid criterion in materials design, then differentiated materials are the necessary outcome. We would argue that differentiation needs to be accounted for in the following ways:

(i) In terms of selection and organisation of Content and the type and range of activities and tasks.

(ii) In terms of particular routes available to learners through both contents and activities.

(iii) In terms of particular pace or rates of learner progress.

(iv) In terms of the particular media through which learners (as individuals or as members of sub-groups) act upon data.

(v) In terms of the learner strategies (differential use of abilities) exploited by different learners even in the undertaking of common or shared tasks.

(vi) In terms of the criteria applied by learners to the evaluation of their relative success or failure at particular tasks or undertakings (i.e. a range of possible formative criteria which learners may deduce and use to establish their own individual or group criteria for success or failure).

1.3.4 Materials can be a Product of the Process

Designers and teachers often see materials as a before-the-event necessity. Most often materials are seen as 'input' for teaching and learning. Frequently this leads to a dependency on such materials, sometimes regardless of their effect. As an alternative, it is possible to see

materials as emerging from the teaching and learning as ongoing achievements of the process. If we can accept the proposals above on authenticity and differentiation, then learner-created materials are a likely outcome. This outcome has another justification in terms of classroom management. Materials created jointly by learners and teacher during the learning can reduce the obligation on the teacher to search continually for new and ready-made materials. Materials which are the product of one course, or one activity within that course, can be recycled within the process of another course, or later within that same course. So, if we see materials as a resource within the teaching-learning process, we may also see them as a resource created by that process.[8]

2. WHAT THE CONTENTS PAGE MIGHT NOT REVEAL

We have been arguing that most language teaching materials have emphasised Content and taken Process for granted. In the past, Content has often been seen as the substance of teaching and learning and, in consequence, Methodology has acted as an inculcator of Content; as a device for 'force-feeding' inventories of formal or functional items into the learner. Process was assumed by and subservient to the Content. As an alternative we have proposed that the Methodology of a curriculum would not confuse Content and Process and make the latter a shadow of the former. On the contrary, we would make Content the servant of the teaching-learning process and that which is acted upon by the teaching and learning. Within Methodology, Content and Process continue to be related and continue to help and influence

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8. It is also the case that any Process has within it a series of tangible (and in principle evaluatable) products, open to inspection by the learners and the teacher, which drive the Process. It is, after all, by being sensitive to these that the Process may change direction.

each other, but Content now adopts the role of 'carrier' of the learner's process competence and the provider of data through which learners select and develop their own means towards the target competence.

As a result, a chosen Methodology in a curriculum can incorporate two sets of related criteria. It can offer criteria for the selection and organisation of Content, the choice of which will be defined by the Process being served. In addition, Methodology can offer further criteria for determining the type and range of the teaching-learning activities which will work upon the Content. We should be clear, however, that in most materials the criteria used in their design are likely to be implicit rather than explicit, and in some cases, confused and inconsistent. In evaluating materials, therefore, we need to identify these implicit or 'hidden' criteria as well as those that are explicit. Also, in adaptation and innovation, we should strive to be consistent in the criteria we have chosen.

This section examines some principles underlying the selection and organisation of Content; Section 3 will go on to examine those principles underlying the Process promoted by materials. In both sections we shall seek to discover possible criteria which might guide Content and Process.

2.1 What is the implicit theory of Language in the materials?

Is the view of language that of a structured system of formal items - syntactic, lexical and phonological - much as in an analytical grammar? Is it a view which sees language in terms of 'functions' or the uses to which these formal items are put, and therefore still a view of some finite set of items to be accumulatively learned? Is it, on the other hand, a view of language as communication, characterised by variable relationships between form and

function: a view which sees language in terms of a dynamic process of sharing and negotiating of meanings through the shared and recreated conventions governing particular communicative performances?

2.2 What is the Focus of the Content of the materials?

In direct terms, what is the content of the Content? We should distinguish here between the explicit Focus and the implicit Focus of the Content. The author of the materials may adopt a particular theme or a series of specific 'situations' as the explicit Content, but the implicit Content may well be a sequence of categorized grammatical patterns or 'functional' items.

2.3 How are the Contents Sequenced in the materials?

What seem to be the criteria for Sequencing adopted by the author both for the materials as a whole and for the units or sections within the materials? Does the author, for example, base Sequencing on some serial progression from 'simplicity' to 'complexity', or from 'frequency' to 'infrequency'? As an alternative to serial progression of either kind, the Sequencing may be cyclic or modular. As such it may not necessarily depend on any linguistic continuum of simplicity to complexity or from frequency to infrequency. The Sequencing may be carried by some thematic development, or by interrelated activities, or by a developing repertoire of interdependent skills. Also, might the Sequencing take the form of gradual expansion from a core; the learner's knowledge and abilities being simultaneously refined within frameworks which develop from a core of knowledge and abilities?

2.4 How are the Contents Subdivided in the materials?

On what basis has the author broken down the Content into units, and into parts or sections of units? What are the criteria on which chapters, units, sections,

lessons, exercises or parts of exercises Subdivided? Typically, such Subdivision may involve serialised structures, 'functions' or 'acts', and may be explicit or implicit. Explicitly the Subdivision may involve episodes in some narrative, or a sequence of 'situations', whilst implicitly the Subdivision may be by sentence structure or 'function'.

2.5 How is Continuity maintained in the materials?

How is the learner's progress consolidated from one part of the materials to the other? In what ways is a particular aspect of Content earlier in the materials reinforced and/or refined in a subsequent part or parts of the materials? Is this reinforcement/ refinement achieved by following some incremental, accumulative pattern of items, or an expansive, aggregative development which may be both retrospective and prospective? Is the Continuity presented through formal items, or are other potential sources exploited such as, for example, the knowledge systems or skill use? Again, as with Focus and Subdivision, we may need to distinguish between explicit and implicit Continuity offered to the learner.

2.6 What Direction should the learner follow through the materials?

Is the Direction the user should follow made explicit, or is it once again implicit? More precisely, is the learner assumed to follow the Direction of the materials in some predetermined way from the beginning, through the middle to the end? Alternatively, is the learner (and the teacher) enabled to take any of a variety of Directions? Is the Direction to be taken open to discussion and choice, or is it closed and prescribed, preventing entrance and exit at any chosen point?

2.7 Proposals for adaptation and innovation.

In the foregoing section we have set out some

questions which can be asked in evaluating the Content of materials. Here we offer a number of proposals concerning Content which may guide adaptation and innovation in its selection and organization.

2.7.1 Theory of Language.

We have already suggested that language as communication is characterised by the simultaneous realisation of the ideational, interpersonal and textual knowledge systems. That, moreover, the social and interpersonal character of communication guarantees that it will be permeated with personal and sociocultural values, attitudes and emotions. That, in consequence, learners of a language are involved in a process of sharing and negotiating and creating conventions against a background of previous and ongoing psychological and social experience. This view emphasises the dynamic interplay between the knowledge systems in particular communicative events. In turn, it can be seen that communication involves certain basic abilities of interpretation, expression and negotiation which act upon and are refined by the knowledge systems. The abilities are themselves realised through and informed by the 'surface' skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Content, if it is to reflect this view of language as communication, should therefore act as a 'carrier' or servant of these related components which underlie communicative performance.

2.7.2 Focus.

It follows from the above that the Focus of Content within a communicative methodology will be on information and data which is both cognitively and affectively significant to the learner and which stimulates - or even demands - negotiation in an interpersonal context. Content will also Focus on communication as a part of, and related to, other aspects of human knowledge and human behaviour.

2.7.3 Sequence

Accepting that the communicative process requires us to deal with variable conventions, we cannot assume that any step-by-step or accumulative Sequence of Content will necessarily be appropriate. The ordering of Content will be affected by learners' alternative routes. Sequencing, as a result, derives from the state of the learner(s) rather than from any implicit 'logic' of the Content itself. 'Simplicity' and 'complexity', 'frequency' and infrequency' in any absolute sense cease to have any value in a communicative methodology. As a result, Sequencing will need to be a cyclic process where learners are continually developing related aggregations of knowledge and refining the use of abilities, rather than accumulating separable blocks of 'static' knowledge. Content becomes something to be moved into and out from, and returned to by learners in a process of finer analysis and refined synthesis. Curriculum designers cannot, therefore, predict with any certainty the 'levels' of Content upon which learners will decide to evolve their own Sequence in learning. They can only anticipate a richness of Content which can activate the learners' process competences so that the ultimate target repertoire(s) become accessible to learners and the particular demands of such repertoires become recognised.

2.7.4 Subdivision

Given the communicative requirement to perceive the interrelationship between the components of the knowledge system - the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual - which interact with the abilities involved in using this knowledge, Subdivision in a communicative methodology cannot be based on serialised forms and 'functions'. It has to be based on activities or tasks to be undertaken where both knowledge and abilities are directed towards communicative performance. So, we are not concerned with

'units' of Content, but with 'units' of activity which may guarantee this relationship within the knowledge systems, and this interaction between knowledge and the underlying abilities that work upon and derive from knowledge.

2.7.5 Continuity.

Within a communicative methodology, Continuity does not lie within an ordering of linguistic items. It can be identified in at least four areas. Firstly, there is Continuity possible from one activity to another and from one task to another. Activities and tasks set up their own requirements for their progressive accomplishment, and it is in the pursuit of these requirements that the learner discovers tangible Continuity. Secondly, Continuity lies within communicative performance during the learning and teaching both in terms of communication in lessons which will include sequences of negotiation, and within the discourse of language data in terms of coherent sequences of utterances. Thirdly, Continuity is provided through ideational knowledge. At the general level the learner has access to Continuity of theme while, at the particular level, the learner can have access to conceptual or notional Continuity. Because ideational Continuity creates and demands a progressive refinement of textual knowledge - refining a concept for example, implies a refinement of its linguistic expression and vice-versa - there can be a parallel Continuity of meaning, grammar and text. Fourthly, Continuity resides in a skill repertoire or cycle of skill-use during an activity or task. For example, the achievement of a particular communicative task might require a progression from reading to note-taking to speaking.

A communicative methodology would exploit at least these four areas of Continuity as clusters of potential Continuities for the learner, rather than expect one alone

to be adequate. All of them can be inherent within any single task or activity. These alternative types of Continuity offer two important advantages for the materials designer. They can serve the full process competences of the learners, and they can allow for differentiation. We need to enable learners to discover their own Continuity, and hence establish the criteria for their own progress. In accomplishing some immediate tasks, learners will impose their own personal and interpersonal order and Continuity upon the task, the communication which the task generates, the ideational and textual data which they act upon, and on the skills they need to use in the achievement of the task. As a result, the progressive refinement of the learner's own process competence can provide an overall learning Continuity.

2.3.6 Direction

It follows from what has been said about Sequence and Continuity within a communicative methodology that Content is not to be followed along some predetermined route. Nor is it the case that Content has some external control and Direction over the teaching-learning procedures. Choosing Directions becomes part of the Methodology itself, and involves activities of negotiation between learners and learners, learners and teachers, and learners and texts. Who or what directs Content becomes a justification for communication about the selection and organization of Content within methodology and about the various routes to be adopted by the learners through any agreed Content. The Direction of Content, and the nature of the Content itself, can be predicted within methodology only inasmuch as it serves the actual learning process of the participants in the group. 'Carrier' Content will need to be as rich and diverse as the possible different Directions learners may choose in working through it.

3. MATERIALS WORKING

This section concerns the Process of teaching/learning and, more, specifically the activities - and the tasks within activities - which language teaching materials may promote. As with Content, we can identify a number of principles upon which to base activities, and, as before, there may be different criteria guiding the application of these principles. We should emphasise that our decisions earlier concerning Content evaluation, adaptation and innovation will be closely related to decisions concerning activities and tasks. Activities work upon the Content, and Content should serve the activities. It is to be accepted that there will be symmetry between the criteria, and the decisions resulting from those criteria, both for Content and activities in the materials. We should also take care not to identify the activities promoted by materials solely with those devices described as 'exercises'. Every part of materials involves or implies an activity or a task on behalf of users. Thus, for example, reading a passage before answering questions about it is itself a task, as is listening to some audio data before working on them. Learners never 'passively' react to data if their attention is directed towards them. In this sense there may well be a close relationship between a piece of data or information and the tasks which are appropriate to it.

3.1 What is the implicit 'theory' of teaching/learning within the materials?

In section 1.2.1 (a) we made a brief distinction between 'Product' materials and 'Process' materials. We can make use of this distinction in considering the implicit 'theory' or view of teaching/learning which determines the overall methodology of the materials. Those materials which are Product-oriented assume that teaching is a matter of transmitting knowledge or information

directly into the learner.[9] Such a view is likely to assume that the knowledge itself will take a single path so that no real change in the knowledge occurs between the 'model' data and the learner's own system. Learning is given the status of a receptive activity involving as little change as possible in the knowledge during its transmission and reception. Learners, in consequence, are all believed to learn the same thing at the same time in the same way.

Process-oriented materials, on the other hand, assume that teaching is a matter of cooperative negotiation with learners, involving the knowledge in a process of joint interpretation and shared expression. Instead of 'transmission' there is a concern for communication. Knowledge is never a static object 'out there' but varies and changes - true to its intersubjective nature. So, learning not only changes the learner's prior knowledge, it also involves a continual change in the new knowledge. Learners in process-oriented materials are consequently assumed to be learning different things at different times and in different ways. However, learning need not be seen as unavoidably subjective. Differential learning is itself subject to that sharing and negotiation of knowledge typical of an individual learner <u>seeking confirmation</u> that she/he is learning and has learned. The search for confirmation leads to further negotiation with the data and further negotiation with the teacher and/or fellow learners.

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9. For an interesting distinction between teaching seen as'transmission' and teaching seen as 'interpretation' see Barnes (1976). Barnes also considers the nature of communication in small groups and its advantages for learning.

These alternatives of Product and Process materials are best seen as points on a continuum, representing different 'theories' of teaching and learning.[10] Nonetheless we can ask which 'theory' of teaching/learning do the materials assume or imply, and thereby discover which orientation they may favour.

3.2 What classroom Procedures do the materials assume?

Do the materials predetermine what occurs in the classroom? What do they leave for the teacher and the learners to determine for themselves? Do the activities involved by the materials assume a similar or recurrent classroom procedure from lesson to lesson or do they assume variation and diversity in procedures? Should teachers and learners follow the procedures laid down in the materials or are they free to choose their own procedures and alter the materials accordingly?

3.3 What Participation do the materials imply?

'Who does what?' with the materials? What opportunities are there for individual, small group and whole class involvement in activities? Does the involvement vary and, if so, for what reason? Is the teacher assumed to be a participant or is she/he excluded from such participation and accorded some 'outsider' or directing activity.

3.4 What Roles are given to the teacher?

Is the teacher seen as a transmitter of knowledge,

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10. Process materials can be seen as standing mid-way on a continuum between Product-oriented materials and Learner-oriented materials. For further discussion of such distinctions and such a continuum concerning the whole language teaching curriculum see M. P. Breen and C. N. Candlin (forthcoming).

a 'model' to be emulated in much the same way as data within the materials? Is the teacher seen as an evaluator who shares the same criteria for success or failure as the materials? Is the teacher a guardian of how the learning ought to take place and be achieved? In brief, are the teacher's roles assumed parallel to those of the materials? Alternatively, is the teacher enabled to exploit the materials as a co-participant with the learners, adopting roles different to and/or complementary with those of the materials?

3.5 What Roles are given to the Learner?

Are learners explicitly or implicitly assumed to see the data in materials as models to be imitated, practised, stored in memory and recalled at some later data? On the other hand, are learners expected to explore and solve unanswered problems within the materials; to interpret information and data, hypothesise and evaluate, and be given the opportunity to 'go beyond the information given'? Is the learner expected to have little relevant knowledge and to be constrained in abilities and skills, or do the materials encourage the learner to exploit the relevant knowledge, abilities and skills she/he already has? Are tasks to be perceived as difficult and of increasing difficulty as the materials progress, or is the learner's initial competence engaged from the start? In short, where do the materials place the responsibility for learning: With the learner? With the teacher? With the materials themselves?

3.6 How do the materials involve the Learner's Process Competence?

Here we specifically refer to the roles expected of the learners by examining the activities and tasks the learner might undertake with the materials. What scope do they offer for activating learner competence, whether

initial, process or target.[11] Language learning, just as language use, depends on the simultaneous engagement of underlying knowledge and abilities. Nonetheless we can accept that some activities in the teaching and learning may focus on one or other of these components of competence. To do so is not to ignore the other components but to refine them simultaneously since, as part of a unity, they are inevitably involved. In undertaking any specific task, all the components of the learner's process competence will be activated to some degree or other. Thus, although the questions that follow focus on each of these components in turn, it is to be expected that materials will involve the learner's process competence as a unity at any point in the learning.

3.6.1 How and to what extent do the materials involve the learner's knowledge systems? What ideational, interpersonal and textual knowledge must the learner exploit, activate, and develop in working with the materials? What demands are made on ideas and concepts, knowledge of interpersonal behaviour, knowledge of language as text?

3.6.2 How are the learner's affects aroused? Is it an aim of the materials to engage the attitudes, values and emotional responses of the learner? Is she/he encouraged to evaluate and judge against a range of personal, interpersonal or social criteria?

3.6.3 How and to what extent do the materials call upon the learner's abilities? In what ways do the materials

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11. See sections 1.2.1(a) and 1.2.3 (d) in this paper. We may regard these competences as parallel to the distinction made between the learner's mother tongue, interlanguage(s) and target language.

activate interpretation and expression? Is negotiation within and among learners, and between learners and teacher, promoted and encouraged? How are learners required to act within tasks? Are the abilities seen as interrelated or are they treated as if in isolation? Are they seen as underlying the surface skills or confused with or directly equivalent to skills?

3.6.4 Which skills are exploited in the materials? Are listening, speaking, reading and writing to be separated or is their interdependency and overlap exploited? Are they treated in some externally motivated sequence, or activated as a cycle or repertoire within some specific task, thus promoting the possibility of mutual refinement?

3.7 Proposals for adaptation and innovation.

What criteria govern activities within communicative language learning materials? The following sections address this question in emphasising learner acts with and through materials.

3.7.1 Negotiating

Activities and tasks in materials should encourage negotiation: both personal or psychological negotiation between individual learners and texts or tasks, and the interpersonal or social negotiation between all participants in the teaching-learning process - between learners and teacher, and learners and learners. From a psychological viewpoint, negotiation is the process of interaction between that which is 'known' in the learner's mind and that new knowledge which the learner confronts. Through such negotiation both the original knowledge and the new knowledge are transformed and a synthesis accommodated in the learner's mind. From an interpersonal point of view, negotiation is a process of seeking and creating consensus between the ideas, affects and social role of one participant and those of others within the communication. Throughout

such negotiation, and as a result of it, ideas can be shared, affects recognised and social roles acknowledged. One important 'outcome' of the process of negotiation is that the conventions upon which the negotiation will be initiated are themselves open to negotiation and recreation.[12] We can see, therefore, that both communication and learning - regardless of the knowledge to be learned - will be a matter of negotiation.

3.7.2 Communicating and Metacommunicating.

Activities and tasks within materials, as we have argued, should promote communicative performance. But such communicative performance should draw upon and extend learners' process competences, thereby engaging the developing knowledge systems and abilities underlying performance through the use of the learners' skills. Both teachers and materials need to distinguish between any target communicative performance and the learning of communication. Communicative performance in the classroom will be made up of both communicative and metacommunicative acts. The latter are those acts where learners jointly interpret, express and negotiate about communication - its nature and processes, and the knowledge and abilities it incorporates. Such acts can be of equal significance in the learner's development of process competence as the use and refinement of that competence through other communicative acts. In consequence, materials need to provide for metacommunication as well as for communication.

3.7.3 Authenticating.

In order to be authenticated by individual learners

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12. For detailed and interesting discussions of psychological and interpersonal negotiation see, for example, Neisser (1976) and Goffman (1972)

and groups of learners according to their own relevance criteria and their own developing process competences, activities and tasks within materials need to be differentiated. (see sections 1.3.2 and 1.3.3 of this article). Activities and tasks need to offer alternatives for who is to undertake what, when and how. They should be sufficiently diverse and comprehensive to engage different learner's knowledge and affects, and abilities and skills, in interrelated and supportive ways. If they are called upon within the group, these differential contributions of the individual learners can be of benefit to all the members of the group. Such differential contributions to the group have dual potential; they can provide the basis for authentic negotiation and allow learners to take on a shared responsibility for the teaching-learning. Instead of presenting a problem, therefore, to the teacher, the diverse contributions of learners can be exploited as sources for learner initiated directions in the learning.

3.7.4 Co-participating.

Activities and tasks in materials should involve teacher and learners as co-participants in the teaching-learning process. Teachers and learners have, of course, their own specific contributions to make towards this process, but teachers and learners may be given equal opportunity to negotiate, evaluate and provide feedback, and to offer new directions for the process itself. Activities and tasks need therefore be less concerned with providing answers than with posing problems for joint interpretation, and with encouraging the sharing of expression as springboards for other activities and tasks beyond the materials. Simply, materials should be a provider of potential for activities and tasks as well as incorporating their own. Materials can, as a result, participate as a creative resource within a network of resources - both human and material.

4. WHAT NEW DIRECTIONS ARE AVAILABLE IN MATERIALS DESIGN?

4.1 Language Learning rather than Language alone and Process rather than Content.

In the preceding sections we have emphasised communication as the overall purpose of the language teaching curriculum. Communication we have defined as a process of relating language forms and language behaviour in the context of social events. We have stressed that the conventions which link forms and behaviour are not fixed for all time, nor certain among different participants in an event, or across events. They are variable and need to be constantly negotiated and accepted. Communication becomes a convention-creating rather than merely a convention-following activity. It is a social and interpersonal process. Learning to communicate is, as a result, not a matter of digesting a static and predictable body of knowledge, but learning how to interpret, express, and negotiate through and about these conventions. As participants in this process, learners naturally start from their own communicative knowledge and abilities. Learning, for language learners, is the gradual development of communicative knowledge and abilities through the process of communication. To be authentic to this definition of the learner's task, materials will have a primary concern for the process of communication. Content in materials will, as a result, be redefined as any information and data which serves and activates communication. Further, since learners will impose upon such information and data different interpretations and will bring to them different contributions, authenticity to some particular target repertoire becomes a secondary concern in materials design. The activation of process competence in the learner, using whatever Content as a 'carrier' of this process competence - possibly including selections from or aspects of some target repertoire - will take priority in materials design decisions.

4.2 Activities rather than 'Models' and Differentiation rather than Predictability.

In fulfilling this concern with process competence, materials take on a new relationship with the learners and the teacher. Rather than directing the teaching and learning, they act as an interdependent resource between the learner and other learners and the teacher, and among all other available material resources. It becomes no longer necessary for particular materials to 'cover' everything in the teaching and learning. They become an 'action-resource' serving as a means for sensitising learners to the actual task of learning to communicate, a means for the observation and analysis of communication, and a means for the development of the knowledge and abilities which the learner contributes from the start. As such, materials will be made up of units of activity with the overall objective of enabling learners how to learn. Units of activity will seek to engage learner abilities - and their realisation through learner skills - and set these to work upon the themes and concepts of ideational knowledge in the context of interpersonal behaviour. To capture and maintain involvement of this process competence, activities are likely to be of high affective content; continually challenging the learner's attitudes, values and emotions. In materials as units of activity, 'texts' - of whatever medium and type - become the servants and means of process competence and cease to be ends in themselves.

Units of activity within materials will be characterised as a wide variety of different problems and will incorporate tasks of different kinds. There will be no explicitly prescribed continuity and sequence between units of activity; activities and tasks will be heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. Each activity will serve as a stimulus representing an initial framework for the learner's prerequisite knowledge and abilities which need to be brought

to bear on some particular tasks. Materials as constellations of activities need no beginnings, middles, and ends in the usual sense. Of course, any activity will have a framework from which it plausibly begins, and it will lead to appropriate though various outcomes or 'products'. However, if negotiation characterises the teaching/learning process, and if different learner contributions are exploited within the activity, there may be no single predictable route through an activity nor through the materials themselves. This differentiation of routes in the learning can allow for the varied accomplishment of learner's individual and shared objectives.

4.3 Materials can pose Problems.

Materials as an 'action-resource' will be characterised by problem-solving. They will need to offer uncertainty, unanswered questions, and challenges to the curiosity of learners, rather than the accumulation of prescribed and unquestionable items of knowledge. In essence, the activities will involve the learners in the process of restoring equilibrium between their initial knowledge and abilities and that knowledge and those abilities incorporated within and demanded by the activity. The materials will be necessarily 'incomplete' in the sense that they will encourage the learner to search beyond the information and data given. Activities as problem-solving would encourage the learner to seek help through other learners' interpretations and expressions and those of the teacher; through other material resources in the classroom - dictionaries, grammars, and other manuals, for example; and through relating what is required of the learner to the real world beyond the classroom and to the appropriate available resources existing there. In this way, the activities within materials will serve as both starting-point and meeting-point for connections between the information and data within the materials and the learner's experienced world. Like the classroom itself, materials can function both as an observatory of human communicative

what is, perhaps, a new challenge to materials designers and teachers. We are obliged to uncover the complexities of these abilities of negotiation, interpretation, and expression in order to activate them in direct ways during the teaching-learning process.

We have previously suggested - section 1.2.1 (a) - that the four skills serve to realise these abilities and can act as a means to their refinement. However, the abilities underlie and act through all skills or any single skill; skills are the observable representations of the abilities in action. Studies of reading and writing, and speaking and listening, have uncovered a whole range of sub-skills appropriate to each main skill and which combine together in its use. It is very likely that the abilities of negotiation, interpretation, and expression are each similarly made up of appropriate combinations of sub-abilities. The sub-abilities of interpretation, for example, may be a cluster or 'complex' of sub-abilities which continually interrelate with one another in order to help and refine actual interpretation. So, interpretation itself may be seen to be made up of the following kinds of sub-abilities:-

(i) Attention and initial Discrimination.

(ii) Making Sense (from global or general meaning-making to particular analysis)

(iii) Going Beyond the Given Information/Data (involving accommodation, inferencing, hypothesizing alternatives, evaluating and judging, and remembering)

We may similarly enlarge the ability of expression in terms of sub-abilities of the following kinds:-

(i) Producing or Representing (involving recall and recreation and the proposal of new meanings in new ways)

(ii) Transferring or Generalising (involving relating different information or ideas or relating the 'known' to the unknown; transferring learning to other activities and tasks; applying new knowledge and refined abilities and skills, and evaluating the outcomes of such expression and/or the feedback it produces)

These are all possible examples of a number of sub-abilities which may combine and interrelate in the learner's efforts to interpret and/or express.[13]

In seeking to develop one or other of the learner's main communicative abilities, materials may activate directly one particular sub-ability or a related combination of sub-abilities. The recognition of the various sub-abilities within the main communicative abilities could provide the materials designer with both a richer and more precise focus of attention and, therefore, a wider range of potential activities and tasks. One new direction available to materials designers, therefore, would be to begin from just these abilities and their sub-abilities. Since Process-oriented materials emphasise the development of learner-abilities - and their sub-abilities - we need to discover more precisely what they are and how they are used in learning. This discovery need not be separate from teaching and learning. It could emerge as a significant outcome from the teaching-learning process. In this way, materials design can become part of a cycle: a provision of activities which themselves reveal learner exploitation of knowledge and abilities which, in turn, offer new directions for materials design by both learners and teacher within the classroom. This uncovering of abilities and this cycle of materials design, we have argued in this article, may most effectively emerge through a communicative methodology.

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13. Limitations of space have prohibited us from discussing and examining these sub-abilities in any detail. For a closer consideration of them and their place in materials design see in particular Part 2 of M. P. Breen & C. N. Candlin (forthcoming) and other sources referred to there.

Lancaster, May 1979.

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behaviour and as a laboratory for the examination and analysis of such behaviour.

Designing problem-solving activities for materials is, of course, a problem-solving activity in itself. If we adopt units of activity in materials design, what kinds of design decisions are likely to confront us? The diagram overleaf generally illustrates the design process we might undertake in planning for an activity. Readers may perceive this process as exactly parallel to an activity they may actually promote in the classroom. The authors would suggest that the particular problem of activities design - and, therefore, materials design - could well be an appropriate problem-solving activity to be presented to learners during the teaching-learning process.

4.4 Materials design can begin with Learner Negotiation.

In considering new directions for materials design, we have so far suggested that materials can incorporate a view of language as communication, can directly reflect learning as a communicative process, and can contribute to this process through the provision of problem-posing activities. Each of these new directions implies that materials design may have, as its initial concern, the ways in which learners may interact with and through the materials. So, materials design could begin with the question: (i) How might learners be encouraged to negotiate with and through the materials? Learner negotiation - as we have indicated in section 3.7.1 - can be both a personal and interpersonal undertaking. Such negotiation interrelates with and builds upon the other communicative abilities of interpretation and expression. Accepting this interrelationship between communicative abilities, the materials designer can seek to provide answers to two further questions: (ii) How might learners interpret the materials and develop interpretation through the materials? and (iii) How might learners be encouraged to express and develop expression through the materials? Each of these questions present

DIAGRAM

DECISIONS IN DESIGNING AN ACTIVITY WITHIN MATERIALS

STEP 1 - INPUT

1.1 What implicit objectives/solutions is the activity to promote?
Is there potential for different objectives/solutions?

1.2 What prerequisite learner contributions will be drawn upon?

1.3 What information/data might be appropriate to the activity?
In Content terms? (Section 2 of this article)
In Process terms? (Section 3 of this article)

STEP 2 - FORMULATION

2.1 What is the initial framework for the activity which relates each element of the Input - potential objectives/ Solutions, learner prerequisites, and appropriate information/data?

2.2 What is the nature of the problem(s) posed? Can learners recognise the problem and formulate or reformulate it?

STEP 3 - SEARCH/TASKS

3.1 Are individual learner interpretations of the problem - and the information/data supplied - allowed for?
Are individual learner solutions promoted?

3.2 How might the group or sub-groups undertake negotiation about individual learner interpretations as a means towards some group solution?

3.3 Might individual members of the group act as observers and evaluators - on the basis of the group's criteria perhaps - of (a) the solutions proposed and (b) the communicative process within the group? (i.e. individuals might act as task-evaluators and communication-evaluators).

STEP 4 - WHAT POTENTIAL OUTCOMES? WHAT FURTHER TASKS?

Either

4.1 (i) Sub-group expression of solutions proposed and sharing with other sub-groups.

(ii) Evaluative negotiation between groups as to the relative appropriateness of the various solutions - involving some agreed criteria.

Or

4.2 (i) Group evaluative negotiation concerning the relative success/failure in (a) the overall activity/problem, (b) specific tasks, or (c) communication.

(ii) Group/sub-group design of an instructional plan for either (a) solving the type of problem(s) dealt with in this activity, or (b) developing the specific communicative knowledge and abilities required by this activity which the group or some of its members felt they had not sufficiently developed.

(iii) Peer teaching on the basis of such an instructional plan.

(iv) Recycle and Transfer in terms of learner-designed activities/problems which build upon and are generated by this particular activity/problem.